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Forme. Complesso parrocchiale del sacro Cuore a Baragalla, Reggio Emilia

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Forme. Complesso parrocchiale del Sacro Cuore a Baragalla, Reggio Emilia

Fabrizio Arrigoni

La costruzione - intellettuale prima che fisica - di una chiesa cattolica origina dalle forme della liturgia. Ciò non comporta alcun precetto o dottrina utilitaristica bensì la comprensione della sintassi dei variegati *signa sensibilia* che ne costituiscono il fondamento certo. Se "la liturgia è tutta segno" (H. Van der Laan) lo spazio dell'*ekklesia* è la topografia "di un santo gioco che l'anima svolge davanti a Dio" (R. Guardini), ovvero il mutuo combinarsi di arredi e vesti, vasellami e odori, fiamme e sculture, acque e dipinti, gesti e movimenti, parole e canti. Il ruolo dell'architettura sarà quello di essere la scena fissa, il fondale di una complessa, articolata cerimonia: un supporto partecipe la cui *concinnitas* dipenderà dall'equilibrio tra necessità funzionali e desiderio espressivo - ovvero il transito tra mondo della materia e mondo dello spirito, tra mondo visibile e mondo invisibile. Una riflessione sulla liturgia della Parola e sulla liturgia eucaristica è l'armatura che sostiene l'operazione compositiva del Sacro Cuore. L'edificio della chiesa è scandito in cinque parti: loggia-atrio, cappella feriale, battistero, aula liturgica, sagrestia. La geometria della sala è una prova di superamento del modello borromeo ed una metamorfosi della tipologia basilicale al fine di interpretare con sempre maggiore forza le riforme del concilio Vaticano II. I fuochi dell'ellisse si specchiano nei poli del rito, l'ambone e l'altare, ora contrapposti lungo una medesima retta. La suppellettile culturale marca una doppia spazialità propria dei due tempi della celebrazione che tuttavia non interrompe, frazionandola, l'unità morfologica dell'aula - separazione e simbiosi tra

lo spazio dell'assemblea che ascolta e lo spazio dell'assemblea che offre, *omnium circumstantium*, il *sacrificium laudis*. Diciotto finestre, impostate dalla quota di 2.80 m., attraverso sguanci molto accentuati, filtreranno la luce naturale tramite diaframmi in alabastro di Volterra. Avvicinandosi al presbitero l'intervallo tra di esse diminuisce e sette tagli raggiungono la quota del terreno frangendo la continuità planimetrica nella luminosità dell'abside; ad occidente una finestra catturerà l'ultimo bagliore. La tavola del Signore, il parallelepipedo regolare dell'ambone e la pala-crocefisso di oltre sette metri sono opera del maestro Ivan Theimer; le incisioni fittamente ripetute sono passi dei Vangeli scritti nelle molte lingue del Mediterraneo. Una ricchezza minuta, da libro sacro, che bilancia l'impaginato spoglio ed austero delle masse architettoniche. Affiancano l'aula una corona di edifici destinati a rendere il complesso un luogo di incontro e di educazione, di riunione e di gioco, di accoglienza e di soggiorno. Le molte attività previste dal programma trovano sede in uno schema analogo di quelli monastici. L'ordito che governa la matrice insediativa risulta normale alla maglia stradale con la sola eccezione data dall'asse longitudinale dell'aula ruotato di circa 19° per un perfetto orientamento della stessa; le aree a spiccata vocazione collettiva si affacciano verso la via, lasciando che le aree con destinazioni più private si dispongano in direzione opposta. I sagrati, i portici, gli orti, i cortili, i giardini modulano la distribuzione dei volumi in una leggibile immagine urbana dove primeggiano la densità, l'equilibrio, il nitore e l'ordine delle parti.



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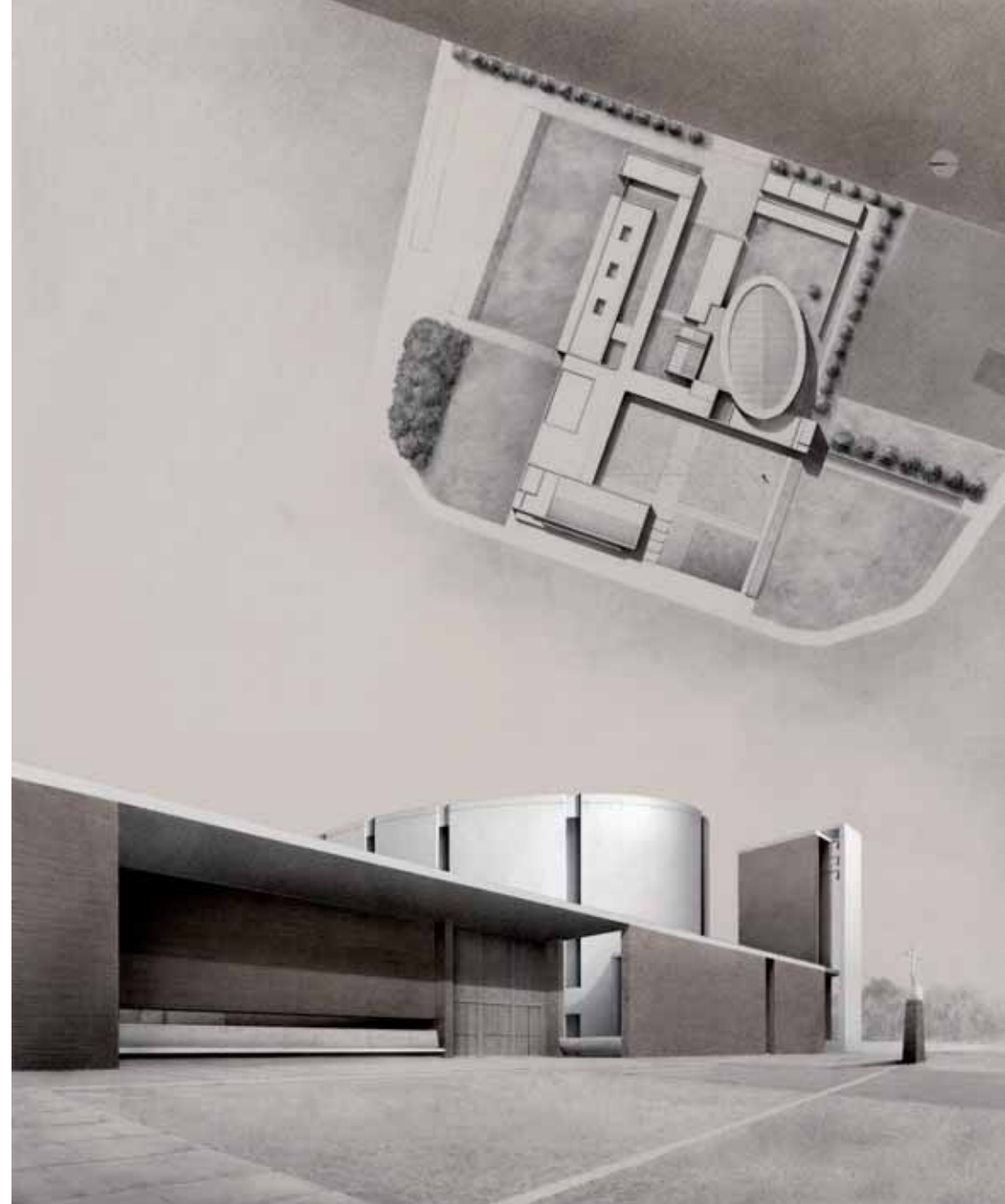
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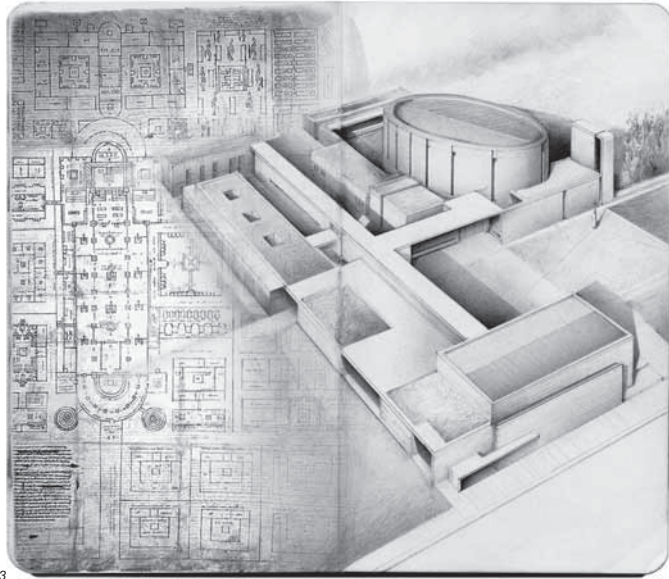
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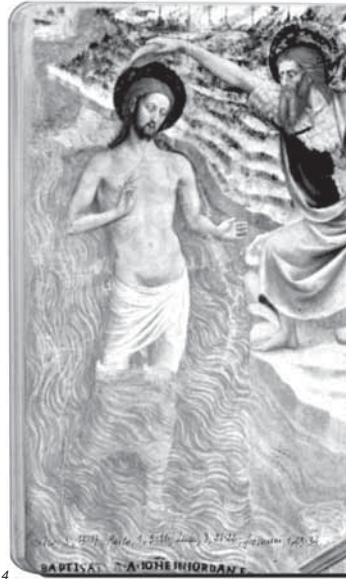
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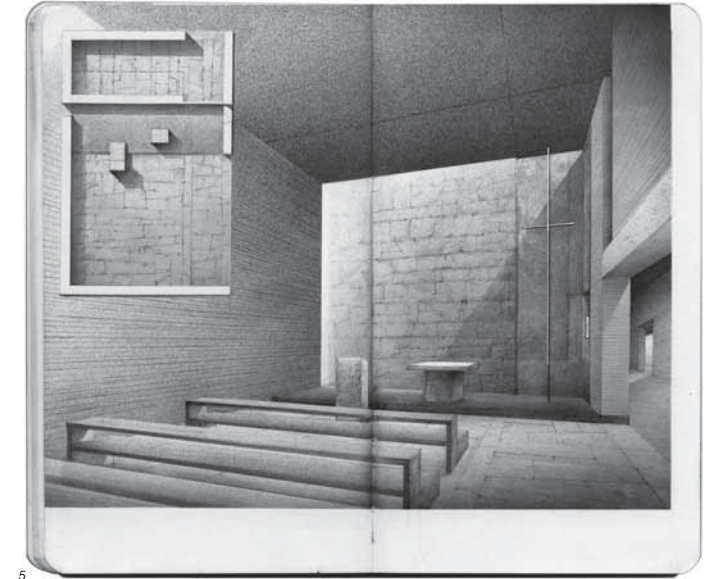
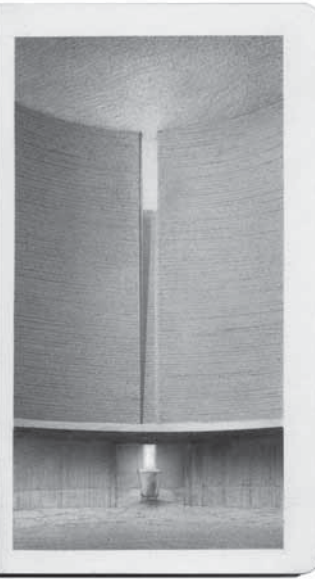




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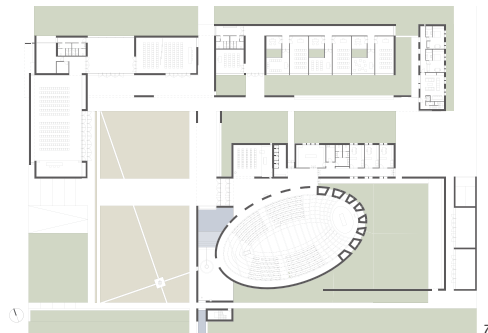
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6



7





Pagine precedenti:

1

*Pala d'altare: bronzo patinato, doratura,
legno di castagno inciso e acidato*

2

Prospettiva esterna

3

Quaderni di studio

Veduta a volo d'uccello del complesso

4

Quaderni di studio

Interno, veduta dell'ingresso al battistero

5

Quaderni di studio

Interno, la cappella feriale

6

Sezione longitudinale

7

Pianta piano terra

8

*Altare: pietra calcarea di Verona detta
biancone, sostegni in bronzo patinato*

9

Prospettiva interna

10

*Pavimentazione Battistero: pietra calcarea di
Verona detta biancone, pietra perlino rosato*

11

*Pavimentazione Aula: pietra calcarea di
Verona detta biancone, pietra perlino rosato
e pietra arenaria macigno*



10



11

Arrigoni Architetti

Forms

Sacro Cuore parish complex
by Fabrizio Arrigoni

(page 28)



The construction – intellectual even before it is physical – of a Catholic church takes as its starting point the forms of the liturgy. This does not imply any precept or utilitarian doctrine, but an understanding of the syntax of the various *signa sensibilia* that make up its firm foundation. If “the liturgy is all sign” (H. Van der Laan), the space of the *ekklesia* is the topography of “a holy game the soul plays in front of God” (R. Guardini), that is to say the reciprocal combinations of furnishings and vestments, vessels and smells, flames and sculptures, water and paintings, gestures and movements, words and song. Architecture’s role is to

be the fixed stage, the backdrop for a complex, articulated ceremony, a support that also takes part, one whose *concinities* will depend on the balance struck between functional needs and the desire for expression – in other words the transit between the material world and the world of the spirit, the visible and the invisible worlds. A reflection on the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharist is the armature underpinning this project. The church building is divided into five parts: porch-atrium, weekday chapel, baptistery, sanctuary, and sacristy. The geometry of the space goes beyond Borromeo’s model and effects a metamorphosis of the basilica type in order to attain a more precise interpretation of Vatican II reforms. The focal points of the ellipse are mirrored in the poles of the rite – the pulpit and the altar – which are no longer grouped together in the chancel but now counterpoised along the same straight line. The objects used for worship mark off a dual spatiality in the two phases of the celebration which nonetheless does not interrupt the morphological unity of the sanctuary by breaking it into parts – a separation and symbiosis between the space of the assembly that listens and the space of the assembly that offers, *omnium circumstantium*, the *sacrificium laudis*. Eighteen windows, deeply played at a height of 2.8 meters, filter the natural light through panes of Volterra alabaster. Approaching the chancel, the interval between the windows diminishes and seven slits progress to floor level, with the luminosity of the apse breaking up the continuity of the ground plan; a western window captures the last ray of light. The Lord’s Table, the regular parallelepiped of the pulpit, and the crucifix-altarpiece more than seven meters tall are the work of the master Ivan Thiemer; the dense web of engraved inscriptions are passages from the Gospels written in the many languages of the Mediterranean basin. This minute richness, reminiscent of sacred writings, counterbalances the spare, austere layout of the architectural volumes. Adjoining the church sanctuary are a group of buildings destined to making the complex a place of encounter and education, a place to meet and to play, to be welcomed and to stay. Space is assigned to the many planned activities in a scheme analogous to monastic complexes. The buildings are lined up with the pattern of the streets, with the sole exception of the church sanctuary, which is rotated about 19° to orient it perfectly in keeping with liturgical requirements. The areas destined for group use face onto the street, while the areas with more private purposes look in the opposite direction. The *parvis*, porches, vegetable gardens, courtyards, and gardens modulate the distribution of the volumes in a legible urban image in which prevail density, balance, lucidity, and management of the parts.

Translation by Susan Scott

Maria Grazia Eccheli and Riccardo Campagnola

Hic fecit ecclesiam by Carmelo Provenanzi

(page 46)



The young nudes that Michelangelo depicts in the Tondo Doni gravitate around a hemicycle of rocks broken behind the Holy Family; they are neophytes ante legem, caught in a spatial structure that, full of religious meanings, marks the spot prior to the meeting of the followers and later, at the age of Constantine, will become the atrium of the catechumens waiting for baptism.

In the Liber Pontificalis the structure of the early Christian church was declined, by specific provisions, in conformity with a *Hic fecit ecclesiam* that Richard Krautheimer, in recent times, defined as the evolution of the Roman basilica during the 11th century A.C.; clerical spaces as *aula regia* in the Basilica of Maxentius, for example, will later be joined by a sequence of spaces related to the needs of the new Christian cult: the atrium, the narthex, the presbytery and smaller halls.

The project by Maria Grazia Eccheli and Riccardo Campagnola carries the echo of

these planimetric-functional displays and the ideal fence, around which the whole project is developed, is the dominant element that filters external to the sacredness of the naos that Maria’s Temple represents.

Laid on a background of light sweet slopes and ridges, the parish complex in Castel di Lama, is an imposing measure, a new Acropolis in the small intestine of the Marche’s hill profile, “turning inward, it is almost a large and natural garden ‘all’italiana’ (...) An idyllic and pastoral landscape set around a polite and smooth background,” not much hyperbolic, to say the truth, but with a large correspondence between human souls and the landscape.

“Sorge in sul primo albor

Move la greggia oltre pel campo, e vede

*Greggi, fontane ed erbe”*²

Located on the external border of the compound, the functions of the whole complex are conceived as a sign that complexes with the linear spatial topography, there are four elements that mark the path of the faithful to the altar. These follow each other, like a game of interpenetrating spaces that, starting from the churchyard, through the narthex, extend along the wide nave, finally arriving into the ferial chapel.

If the churchyard is the union hinge between the spaces of the catechesis and the church, the narthex begins the mystical journey to the presbytery. To reveal this initiatory function is the octagonal baptistery – a clear reference to the Cathedral of Ascoli baptistery – whose rough-hewn travertine cladding seems to allude to the massive external invading the internal; perhaps a fragment of a pre-existence virtually needed? Crossing the entrance threshold of the great hall, everything is austere and composed; the liturgy of the word and song is accompanied by the silent language of the side walls, written by the light of the windows on the top, almost clariora of ancient basilicas.

The expressive power of this great space, in contrast to the parietal representations in the early Roman domus ecclesiae with their didactic role, is the directional light, like a telescope led to a specific point of view, flows along the surfaces to mark the rite of passing day. The light is high, “just not an earthly and visible light that shines before the eyes of every man, (...) it was but a light stronger than the common, or even strong enough to penetrate everything. It was the light that created me. And if I was under it, it was because I had been created by it.”³

This dialogue between transcendence and immanence, attributed to the divine dimension which descends to the human stature, involves the lacerate anatomy of the bronze crucifix: placed in the interval that separates the church from the ferial chapel, as a fixed point of observation of both churches, becomes an integral part of the scene, polar reference for the faithful and, at the same time, image reaching out beyond the borders of the hall’s space. In replacing the figure of Pantocrator “... a Christ who communicates from afar all his suffering. The body is disharmony suspended secure the tragic moment of the crucifixion”⁴ but is also gateway and boundary line to the last station of the longitudinal path: the ferial chapel. It is an autonomous space and, in the same time, connected with the main hall from which it detaches by Eucharistic adoration chapel, a wound on the landscape and a moment of pause, struck by the light from above, emphasizes the sacredness of the place. In section, there is a change of altitude between the church and the share of just over that coincides with the town’s cemetery which corresponds to a change of atmosphere; entering the ferial chapel, it becomes diaphanous. The slope of the roof is dematerialized, presenting the viewer with an incomplete entity, as if the temporary substitute for the ruin of itself.

From the window that is the focus of the ferial chapel one sees only the sign of the cross, the back of the crucifix of the main church. At the lower level of the faithful members, finds it’s setting Maria still terrestrial and belonging to the human world before the assumption to the heaven. The statue, on a podium of white eroded marble, is the only iconographic element in this environment where all elements of the project appear to contribute to a choral language made of light, matter and space. Best vitium for the journey to the spirit.

Translation by Bruno Gerolimetto

¹ Guido Piovene, *Viaggio in Italia*, Baldini & Castoldi s.r.l., Milano 2003

² Giacomo Leopardi, *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell’Asia*, XXIII, Canti, Tip. F. Riva, Verona 1959.

³ Sant’Agostino, *Le Confessioni*, Carlo Carera, Città nuova, Roma 1992.

⁴ Pino Castagna, “Projects report”

César Portela

Overseas by Alberto Pireddu

(page 52)



The Proem to Book VI of *De Architectura* by Vitruvius tells the story of the Greek philosopher Aristippos who, after being shipwrecked on the island of Rhodes, saw some geometrical figures drawn on the shore and addressed his companions with the famous words, “Let us be of good cheer, for I see the traces of man.” According to Vitruvius, the geometric figures (*geometrica schemata*) traced on the sand were the unmistakable manifestation of human intelligence, giving the poor castaways reason to believe they would be saved.

Today, perhaps similar comfort might be given to anyone emerging from the sea and finding the Platonic geometry of the *Cementerio de Fisterra* that César Portela

created on the cliffs of the *Costa da Morte* in Galicia, the scene of epic shipwrecks since time immemorial.

In ancient times this was regarded as marking the outer reaches of the world, and also the end of the *Camino de las estrellas* along which down through the centuries the stories of those looking for eternal life on their way to Santiago interwove with the stories of those losing their terrestrial life. In this mythical place the Galician architect has managed to dissolve the traditional limits of the burial ground to allow the hill, the sea, the stream and the sky to define the “city of the dead”.

His stone tombs are arranged along the way leading to the *Faro de Fisterra*, gathered at the sides of small existing tracks to create an ordered disorder, the imaginary endpoint of which would be a *mirador* looking out over the sea.

He has placed them on a base of scarcely hewn blocks, anchored in the earth, almost as if wishing to indicate a possible reunion of spirit and matter, separated by uneven spaces, singular rays of light and hope.

And lastly the architect decided to give separate definition only to collective functions, with the oratory, the morgue and the autopsy room gathered around a small atrium, beautified through the use of a variety of materials: rough Corten steel, lead and glass panes set to catch the morning light.

The project involves a double process of abstraction: on the one hand a search for crystalline essentially, capable of dividing the necessary from the contingent and, on the other hand, the attempt to give an eloquent architectural form to the inevitability of death, silence, absence, transcendence and mystery.

It is as if Portela had generalised his perceptions to their maximum point of decomposition, and then went back on his tracks, recomposing them in terms of real objects of measured precision and geometric purity.

His *cajas* lend a sense of balance to the surrounding countryside, with its violent and stormy nature: the conscious gesture of a person who wanted to see his own voice dissolve in the “anonymous territory of Architecture”, embedding a few stones holding fragile mortal remains among the granite shapes sculpted by geology.

The emptiness they enclose embody the intimate rite of greeting in a “cosmic scenery”, that has the power of translating them into the splendid metaphor of a new beginning.

The tombs “gather the spirits of the place”, writes Portela in the notes defining his idea of the project, ideally calling them together and striving to preserve their memory among the living: sailors and seafarers caught in shipwrecks, saints and pilgrims, the ancient Celts and their myths.

They search to establish a dialogue with a distant and unknown infinite; they invite us to look beyond the sea and its intense blue, transcending pre-established limits and frontiers, because really:

“Boundaries die and are reborn, change place, disappear and then reappear unexpectedly. They chart experience, language, living space, the body with its health and sicknesses, the psyche with its ruptures and rearrangements, (...) the ego with its plurality of fragments, (...) thought with its maps of order.”²

And life, to quote Arthur Rimbaud, is no more than another name for death, the only one we dare use, hoping thus to state it off.

Linked to the secular traditions of the *Horrea*³ and still ‘uninhabited’, the tombs of *Finis Terrae* wait to begin their voyage in time, deriving strength from their own geometric clarity and the well-known *firmatas* of architecture.

Their poetic hermeticism reflects the unknowable character of death, but dissolves its fear in the brightness to the East.

¹ “Bane speremus, hominum enim vestigia video”. Cfr. Vitruvio, *Lib. VI, proemio*.

² Claudio Magris, *Come i pesci il mare*, in AA.VV. *Frontiere*, supplemento a “Nuovi Argomenti”, 1991, n. 38, p. 12.

³ Cfr. Carlos Martí Aris, *Silenzi eloquenti*, Milano: Christian Marinotti Edizioni s.r.l., 2002, pp. 157-161.

The idea behind the project by César Portela

(page 57)



“Just because a form is simple does not mean that our experience of it must be simple, much less simplistic ...”

The Cape of Finisterre seeks an architecture, at least from me, that is an extension of the landscape, one that dissolves silently into nature, almost as if it did not exist. How can one impart these architectural conditions in planning a cemetery for this site? Our present culture thinks of the cemetery as an enclosure, a graveyard, a limited, closed, walled-off space, with an inside and an outside.

The alternative presented here, on the other hand, comes from an open type of cemetery in terms of its structure, one that does not call for extensive excavation. It tries to adapt itself to the topography and thus minimize the impact that a conventional - and compact - cemetery would inflict on the landscape.

The proposal calls for a cemetery of small structures, clustered along an existing road that follows the hillside, without enclosure of any kind and with the ever present sea as a background.

This departure from enclosures and the elimination of borders and walls means there will be no customary reference to a particular space. How can this difficulty

be surmounted? By making use of other references and by establishing other limits. Specifically, those that marked the ancient Celtic burial grounds: the sea, the river, the mountain, the sky. This will be a cemetery whose walls are the hillside, the mountain, the river and the sea, and whose ceiling is the sky. A cemetery conceived as a city for those who have died, bearing close resemblance to a city for the living.

The image of the cemetery is that of a pathway through a cluster of houses, a snake that slithers down the mountainside to the sea, adapting its route to the abrupt variations of the terrain. Along its way the graves, large drawers recessed in massive, geometric blocks, suggest the enormous granitic forms scattered over the flanks of the ancient hills, some of which come to rest at the bottom of the slope, where the land is flat; while others, more venturesome, roll on, overcoming the irregularities of the terrain and plunge over the cliff, where they remain forever, their forms chiseled by the implacable wind and waves.

The project imitates the way nature produces its architecture, but also reflects the form in which the inhabitants of the land have produced theirs.

As we approach these stones, we realize they are places made by human beings. Blocks imbued with geometry, intentional forms, yet arranged in apparent disorder. Blocks that receive the recessed tombs, like boxes or containers left on shore after a shipwreck, a disordered *ponerium* where the dead are interred not in the city, but along a simple road away from town.

While these blocks may recall Pompeii’s Via Sepulcra, their dominant motifs remain the primitive landscape of northwestern Galicia and its archaic, archetypal burial grounds. The project thus fuses the classic and the vernacular, at the same time that it ventures into the unexplored space that lies between the two, that ambivalent, indefinite and indeterminate space in which created objects fall somewhere between artifact, sculpture and architecture.

I have tried to make mountain, sea, sky, and space itself the protagonists of this project, just as the minimalists turned the art gallery itself into a main artistic event. The strong emotional resonances evoked by these natural elements constitute the fundamental basis for the project.

The heart of the project is its site, much more than its programmatic requirements. The project recognizes the cemetery, not as a place of tragedy nor a place for a cult of the dead, which is normally the case, but as an ordinary, vital place that one encounters while walking along a path with a continuous view of the sea. Just as in the symbolist paintings of Arnold Böcklin, particularly his famous “Island of the Dead”, this cemetery awakens feelings of both loss and hope.

Architecture interprets space rather than constructing it. This interpretation transcends the territory of the project. It does not define isolated objects so much as link them to the geography and history around them. Understood in this way, objects can never retain their identity away from what surrounds them. And vice versa. The surrounding land assumes that objects belong to it and incorporates them into its geography, geometry and memory. Buildings and landscape are seen as one. The organic form of the land, in this case the mountain, is juxtaposed against the precise, rational geometry of the stone boxes. The boxes float freely across the hillside, yet, anchored to the soil, they merge inevitably with the earth. Spirit and matter begin in opposition and end by becoming one. The infinite expanse of sea and sky form the cosmic scenario of the project.

The cemetery, the world of those who have died, is a network of roads that cross the hillside, roads that once led to old mills and rustic farms. As we walk these roads we come upon boxes anchored to the hillside, bordering the road. Inside, in the recessed chambers, lie the bodies of those who have died.

The boxes are quite large, and of great presence. As we face inward, all existence is compressed within the square opening. The box, an eye that traps everything taking place before it, convenes the spirits that haunt the land. Facing outward toward the sea and the mountain, where all life once existed, our vision expands and refocuses, the sublime crystallizes before us.

The center line of each container is unique; each follows a different angle and none is parallel to the rest. Drawn on a page they suggest a chain of ragged mountain peaks. These center lines form the letters of a metaphorical topography, where the changing play of letters creates new nations, valleys and borders. No line by itself has meaning. It has meaning only when it begins to act in concert with others. Objects are not contained within the lines, but between them. The roads form terraces, walls, small town squares. The roads form places without ceasing to be roads.

Between each pair of containers a line of sight forms a calligraphy specific to each moment. Behind the containers, around their corners, between their center lines, lie thoughts, sorrows, surprises. The dead move between grief and hope, between silence and infinity, leaving behind them the muffled sound of footsteps that are lost in the silence behind a corner of light. What has happened? Architecture has been freed from identification with objects and has become experience.

When the right relationship exists between architecture and place, the architect becomes anonymous. Others, not the architect, are the protagonists. Paradoxically, this is when the presence of the architect is most necessary, most intensely felt. There is an interplay of ideas and energy between architecture and nature, even though they seem to be different entities charged with symbolic resonances. Land does not move, terrain is not changed, but landscape is transformed. What is proposed here recognizes and respects what has existed before, as heritage. The project is based on this heritage. It takes advantage of it, uses it and integrates it as part of a new totality. This totality creates new objects, but above all creates new tensions. The most important aspect of this project is not its modules, which may well seem repetitious or even awkward, but the relationships among the modules. What matters is not the objects, not even the project, but its strategy. The intentional distribution of these containers has as its goal that they be encountered.

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